
INTRODUCTION:

THE MARINE AIR-GROUND TASK FORCE (MAGTF)

MAGTFs are the organizations through which Marine forces are tailored to meet specific operational requirements. They are the key element of the Marine Corps contribution to Naval expeditionary capabilities.

-- United States Marine Corps:
Concepts & Issues, 96

The teams and staffs through which the modern commander absorbs information and exercises his authority must be a beautifully interlocked, smooth-working mechanism. Ideally, the whole should be practically a single mind.

-- General Dwight D. Eisenhower
U.S. Army "Leadership: Quotations
from the Military Tradition," *Crusade in
Europe, 1948*

Nothing is so important in war as an undivided command.

-- Napoleon I
Maxims of War, 1831

Course Overview

MAGTF Historical Background

The Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) organization is based on combined arms integration of ground combat, aviation combat, and combat service support elements into a cooperative team under a single Marine commander and command element (CE). The concept for this organization traces its origins back to the 1920s when the Marine Corps shifted its primary mission from defending advanced naval bases to seizing them. In adopting this new mission, Marine Corps planners had to address many problems associated with making landings on hostile shores. Foremost among these problems was developing a tactical unit that had the combat potential, balance, and flexibility necessary to accomplish amphibious warfare.

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Course Overview, Continued

Amphibious Warfare

Amphibious warfare is among the most complex and difficult operations in war. In essence, it requires putting a force on a hostile shore and rapidly building up combat potential from nothing while fighting an enemy who may have had years to prepare its defenses. It is a unique form of warfare that exists in that nexus between the sea and land, making every aspect very complicated. Just getting the landing force ashore requires highly specialized equipment and tactics.

Unity of Command in Amphibious Warfare

Limitations on ship-to-shore lift dictate that the landing force must be fairly light without the massive amounts of artillery, armor, and logistical support normally associated with land campaigns. The landing force had to be balanced and self-sufficient to take care of all their needs until follow-on forces arrived.

To be successful, the landing forces have to be highly flexible and responsive to a rapidly changing situation ashore. All combat and combat service support elements have to work in concert with one another as a combined arms team to maximize their combat power. Unity of command is therefore paramount in amphibious operations.

Marine Corps Expeditionary Force

In the decades between the world wars, the Marine Corps worked to create a force specifically equipped, trained, and configured to succeed in the esoteric art of amphibious warfare. Along with developing new equipment, weapons, and doctrine, the Marine Corps had to adapt its organization to the new mission. In 1923, the existing concept of the defensive Advanced Base Force (ABF) was abandoned in favor of the offense-oriented Marine Corps Expeditionary Forces (MCEF). As the new MCEF practiced amphibious landing during fleet exercises and the Marine Corps schools at Quantico, Virginia wrestled with various problems, the Corps continued to develop new doctrine. In 1933, the Expeditionary Forces evolved into Fleet Marine Force (FMF), making the Corps more clearly the amphibious assault element of the U.S. Navy. The following year, the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* was published as the official Marine Corps amphibious doctrine.

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Course Overview, Continued

Amphibious Corps

In the months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Marine Corps grew dramatically in size and created two new amphibious divisions from what had been reinforced brigades. As the crucible of combat in the Pacific demonstrated the need for close coordination between ground combat, air combat, and support elements, the Marine Corps created the antecedent of the modern MAGTF in two amphibious corps under unified command elements.

The III Amphibious Corps was formed in Guadalcanal and included the 3d and 1st Divisions. The V Amphibious Corps was based in Hawaii and included the 2d and 4th Divisions. This reorganization relieved the Marine Corps' divisions from much of their former command and logistical support responsibilities, which allowed them to streamline their structure and concentrate on their ground-combat role.

More Organizational Changes

The need for close interservice cooperation also led to additional organizational changes. Joint Assault Signal Companies (JASCO) were created as an early joint command with the responsibility to coordinate air support, naval gunfire, and shore parties. By the end of World War II, the Marine Corps was the master of amphibious operations and was able to seize any island it set its sights on no matter how well defended.

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Course Overview, Continued

Marine Downsizing

In the years immediately after World War II, the prospects for large-scale amphibious operations appeared remote and the Marine Corps' mission and even existence was unclear. The United States was at peace and the development of the atomic weapons convinced many that all forms of conventional warfare were obsolete. Within 5 years, the Marine Corps fell from a wartime high of nearly half a million to fewer than 75,000 active duty Marines.

By 1950, the Marine Corps was fighting for its very existence. That same year, however, the Korean War began and the U.S. again had a desperate need for an effective amphibious assault force. The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, composed primarily of the 5th Marines and Marine Air Group 33, was committed to the desperate defense of the Pusan Perimeter. The 1st Marine Division was hastily formed for the audacious landing at Inchon. These units were commanded by single commanders with integrated air-ground staffs. They were prototypes of the modern MAGTF.

Command Element

Despite its obvious wartime usefulness, the concept of a separate MAGTF headquarters was abandoned after the Korean War. The new *ad hoc* policy called for the commander of the Ground Combat Element (GCE) to assume control over the MAGTF. Emphasis was on the ground combat role with the aviation and logistic elements serving in supporting roles. After the Vietnam war, the Marine Corps reemphasized its amphibious mission and reactivated the concept of separate headquarters for MAGTFs as they were formed. Under the more formal system, the MAGTF headquarters became the CE.

Course Organization

The Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) (8804) is organized in the following manner with respect to lessons, reading hours, issues hours, and total hours for the course.

Lesson	Reading Hours	Issues Hours	Total Hours	Page Number
Lesson 1: Introduction to the MEF as a Warfighter	1	1	2	1-1
Lesson 2: MEF Command Element	1.5	1	2.5	2-1
Lesson 3: MEF Battlespace Management	2	1	3	3-1
Lesson 4: Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) C ⁴	2.5	1	3.5	4-1
Lesson 5: Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Intelligence	4	1	5	5-1
Lesson 6: Force Protection	2	1	3	6-1
Lesson 7: Fighting the Aviation Combat Element (ACE)	6	1	7	7-1
Lesson 8: Fighting the Ground Combat Element (GCE)	4	1	5	8-1
Lesson 9: MEF Operational Fires	2	1	3	9-1
Lesson 10: MEF Targeting	1	1	2	10-1
Lesson 11: Sustaining the MEF	4	1	5	11-1
Final Examination			2	
Total	30	11	43	

Reserve Retirement Credits

The total number of study hours required for this course, including the time for the comprehensive final examination, is 43 hours. For reservists, inactive duty retirement credits are awarded for every 3 hours of study time. **The total number of reserve retirement credits awarded to reserve officers for completing this course is 14.**

Course Objectives

MAGTF Structure	While uniquely task-organized for specific missions, all MAGTFs share certain characteristics in their organization. The structure of the MAGTF determines what its capabilities and limitations are and what types of missions it can undertake. One of the objectives of this course is to comprehend the internal structure, functioning, capabilities, and limitations of all four elements of the MAGTF.
Command and Control	The MAGTF is ultimately an effort to provide unity of command within a particular battlespace. An objective of this course is to explore the MAGTF command and control (C ²) systems and their functions internally and externally.
Joint and Multinational Operations	In recent years, the Marine Corps has been involved in operations with the other services, with other countries, with the United Nations, and other international organizations. Another objective is to explain how the MAGTF connects with joint and multinational command, control, communications, computer and intelligence systems (C ⁴ I) and its relationship to doctrine for targeting and airspace management.
Aviation Element	One of the most important differences between a MAGTF and other comparably sized tactical units is that a MAGTF has a sizable organic aviation component. Understand the concepts used by the MAGTF command to employ aviation.
Combat Service Support	To function for any length of time, the MAGTF needs its organic combat service support element (CSSE). Examine MAGTF combat service support (CSS) planning considerations in support of joint operations.
Battlespace Management	In the dynamic multidimensional arena that MAGTFs operate in, battlespace management is critical. Comprehend how the MAGTF commander sees and shapes battlespace, employing the single battle concept.

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Course Objectives, Continued

Planning	As with all aspects of Marine Corps operations, planning plays a critical part. Comprehend the deliberate, amphibious, and Marine Corps planning process and how they apply in joint and multinational operations.
Intelligence	Good command decision making requires equally good intelligence. Understand the intelligence preparation of the battlespace (IPB) process and its application within the MAGTF.
Offensive and Defensive Operations	The essence of the MAGTF, or any military organization, is its ability to destroy its enemy while preventing the enemy from destroying it. Understand the roles, missions, capabilities, limitations, and employment of the MAGTF in offensive and defensive operations.
Historical Application	It is not necessary to examine the MAGTF in the abstract. Understand the role of the MAGTF in Operations <i>Desert Shield</i> and <i>Desert Storm</i> .
Amphibious Operations	The MAGTF has its origins in the Marine Corps' traditional role as an amphibious assault force. Understand the roles, missions, capabilities, limitations, and employment of the MAGTF in amphibious operations.
Doctrine in Joint and Multinational Operations	Like all of the armed services, the Marine Corps has its own operational doctrine. Comprehend how current Marine Corps doctrine for amphibious, offensive, and defensive operations affects the other services in joint and multinational operations.
MAGTFs in the Joint and Multinational Arena	With their unique structure and capabilities, MAGTFs provide a distinct contribution to joint and multinational operations. Understand the roles, missions, capabilities, and employment of the MAGTF in joint and multinational operations.

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Course Objectives, Continued

**U.S. Military
Forces in
Joint and
Multinational
Operations**

Comprehend the roles, functions, capabilities, and limitations of U.S. military forces and how they are applied to joint and multinational operational scenarios.

Course Description

Introduction	This portion of <i>The Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF)</i> (8804) course traces the origins and development of the MAGTF through most of the 20th century. It demonstrates how the MAGTF has constantly evolved to meet the needs of the Marine Corps in a dynamic national security environment. This historical sketch provides you with a basis to understand how the modern MAGTF came into existence and an appreciation of how its inherent flexibility and task-specific structure allows it to adapt as the situation dictates.
Introduction to MEF as a Warfighter	This lesson deals specifically with the structure and capabilities of the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). Special emphasis is on the naval aspect of the MEF and how it differs from an Army Corps.
MEF CE	The MAGTF is made up of several distinct combat and CSS elements. It is the CE's responsibility to synchronize all of the elements of the MAGTF into an integrated team focused on the single battle. The CE also has to be adaptive to working in a joint or multinational environment.
MEF Battlespace Management	Battlespace management provides a conceptual framework for understanding the modern multidimensional battlefield. This lesson addresses battlespace management in context with joint operations, control measures, and deep operations.
MAGTF C⁴	Commanders need to know what is going on in the battlespace. They also need to be able to control their own forces and coordinate with friendly forces. Command, control, communications, and computers (C ⁴) give them this ability. This lesson examines C ⁴ within the MAGTF and how they contribute to the decision-making process.

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Course Description, Continued

**MAGTF
Intelligence**

Knowing what forces the enemy has arrayed against you, where they are, and what their intentions are is half the battle. This lesson explores the MAGTF intelligence-gathering structure, the commander's role, and how intelligence is used in a joint or multinational setting.

**Force
Protection**

Commanders have always had to take measures to protect their forces from the enemy. Today this fundamental requirement is made much more difficult with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and prolonged deployments to settings where there is neither war nor peace. This lesson highlights some of the basic concepts of force protection.

**Fighting
the ACE**

Marine Corps aviation has a long history of supporting the ground war. This lesson deals with the Aviation Combat Element (ACE) functions in the MAGTF, its structure, control processes, and the planning process.

**Fighting
the GCE**

This lesson provides a foundation on the structure, capabilities, and doctrinal concept of employment of the Ground Combat Element (GCE) within the MAGTF.

**MEF
Operational
Fires**

The MAGTF is a complex combined arms team with a myriad of weapons systems available to it. This lesson addresses the organization and employment of organic and supporting operational fires.

**MEF
Targeting**

Before you bring your firepower to bear, you need to find, classify, and prioritize potential targets. This lesson deals with targeting and how it supports the commander's battle plan.

**Sustaining
the MEF**

Effective logistical support is essential for the MEF to function any length of time. This lesson covers the principles and functions of logistics in general and CSS organization, capabilities, and limitations in particular.

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Course Description, Continued

Course Themes There are a number of themes that run throughout this course that are related to other courses in the Command and Staff College Distance Education Program (CSCDEP). These will not always be identified, hence periodically refer back to other courses in the 8800 Program.

Although the MAGTF has been institutionalized, the comprehensive doctrine detailing its employment continues to evolve. The dynamics of blending combat capabilities within one service is a powerful, adaptive capability of Marine Corps operational forces. Lessons learned in this course are also directly applied to the formation and employment of a Joint Task Force (JTF) in a multinational environment. Therefore, the following themes recur throughout *The Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF)* (8804) course.

Integration of Combat Capabilities The synergy that the command, ground, aviation, and logistics elements bring together is a pervasive issue when discussing the MAGTF. MAGTFs are task-organized for a mission and are deployed and employed using effective warfighting principles.

Integration with Joint and Multinational Forces In the political dimensions of military force structure and resources, the MEF is often advertised as "small enough to get there, yet strong enough to win." While the MAGTF is capable of independent expeditionary action, it is also a powerful expeditionary element designed to be fully integrated into a combatant commander's joint campaign plan. Assuming diminishing resources within the DoD, the MAGTF must have the ability to readily integrate with other joint forces. Therefore, you must gain a comprehensive knowledge of the MAGTF and its complementary or supplementary functions with other joint forces. MAGTFs employed without connectivity to other joint, combined, or multinational forces present a seam of vulnerability that may be exploited by a hostile force.

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Course Description, Continued

MAGTF Planning Levels and Capabilities	The MAGTF is offered as a force that contributes to unified action across the range of military operations. It is capable of short duration, high intensity operations, forcible entry, and sustained operations ashore. Its operational style emphasizes top-down planning, decentralized execution, integration of battlespace functions (BSF), and the single battle concept of C ² .
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MAGTF Deployment, Employment, and Sustainment	Key to understanding the MAGTF includes how it deploys to an area of operations, integrates with other joint forces, sustains itself, and contributes to sustaining other joint forces. The MAGTF's aggregate usefulness in military operations must be understood by planners and commanders of all services.
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Relationship to Joint Warfare

Building Joint Awareness

The Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) (8804) continues the process of building joint awareness by study and discussion of the training and educational strategies used throughout the Marine Corps. Course readings provide you with the tools necessary to analyze these strategies and explore their application (or lack of application) and their contribution to a war's outcome.

Introduction to Joint Warfare

The Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) (8804) does **not** provide all the information needed for work in a joint and combined environment. However, it does lay a solid foundation for continued study that, upon completion of the CSCDEP, will result in a good working knowledge of war as it is currently fought. This course also gives you an idea of how it may be fought in the future.

Course Readings

Required Readings

- Some **required readings** are provided to you in *The Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Readings* (8804). These include articles from various professional magazines, journals, as well as doctrinal publications reprinted in annexes. Each annex is referenced in the course according to its sequence in each lesson.
 - Other **required readings** are provided to you in the *Joint Pub Readings* (8800); the *FM/FMFRP Readings* (8800); or the *FMFM Readings* (8800). These military publications are referenced under the section title Required Readings within each lesson.
 - The **required readings** provided to you with this course as separate publications are as follows:
 - MCDP-1, *Warfighting*
 - MCDP-2, *The Nature of Intelligence*
 - MCDP-4, *Logistics*
 - MCDP-6, *Command and Control*
 - MCWP 5-1, *Marine Corps Planning* (draft)
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Supplemental Readings

In addition to the mandatory readings, each lesson contains references or supplemental readings that you may peruse as you need them. They are not included with your course material.

Course Evaluation

Introduction

First, understand the material presented in *The Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF)* (8804) so you develop personal syntheses and interpretations on the nature and principles of MAGTF education in the Marine Corps.

Then, demonstrate your understanding of these principles through successful completion of a complex, multiple choice examination.

Examination

- The final requirement for *The Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF)* (8804) is a proctored, 2-hour, machine-graded, closed-book examination. There are 50 complex, multiple choice questions. The examination questions are drawn from information found in the Required Readings and from within the lessons.
 - This examination is content-based in nature; you should be very familiar with course content and subject matter both in preparing for the examination and then in responding to the final examination items.
 - There may be more than one answer that appears to be correct for a given item. You must choose the **best** answer.
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Course Critiques

A course critique form is included with this course. Please comment as the form instructs. Future changes in this course will be based, in part, on student comments and recommendations. **Please complete the critique and remember: What really helps for the future are suggestions on how to do things better!**
